

## California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names CHARTER As Amended on February 14, 2022

### I. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION

California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names

### II. PURPOSE

The purpose of the California Advisory Committee on Geographic Names (CACGN) is to advise the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) and other organizations regarding geographic names to be used on maps or any other publication published by federal agencies.

This Charter sets forth the roles, responsibilities, and terms of engagement for the CACGN. The Charter explains the CACGN's functions and processes and establishes opportunities for expert input and public participation. The role of committee members, ex-officio members, federal advisor members, the Chairperson, and Vice Chairperson is also defined in this Charter.

### III. BACKGROUND

The BGN is a federal body created in 1890 by executive order and established in its present form by Public Law 80-242 (43 U.S.C. 364-364f) in 1947 to maintain uniform geographic name usage throughout the government. The BGN is housed within the U.S. Geological Survey (commonly known to as "USGS") and comprises representatives of federal agencies concerned with geographic information, population, ecology, and management of public lands. Sharing its responsibilities with the Secretary of the Interior, the BGN promulgates official geographic feature names with locative attributes as well as principles, policies, and procedures governing the use of domestic names, foreign names, Antarctic names, and undersea feature names.

The CACGN was established in 1963 as a committee housed within the California Natural Resources Agency (Agency) and composed of designees from the Department of Conservation, Department of Fish and Game, Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of Water Resources. It was chaired by the State Geologist.

Additional members, including the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the State Lands Commission, were added in subsequent years. In 1997, the

chair of the committee became a rotating position among the CACGN members for a two-year term.

#### **IV. PROCESS**

As noted above, the BGN is a federal body charged with maintaining uniform geographic name usage throughout government. It considers proposals, suggestions, and concerns associated with geographic names and evaluates whether the subject of the proposal fits their criteria to be considered. If the proposal fits their criteria, the BGN then forwards those related to California to the CACGN for an initial review.

The CACGN reviews and researches each proposal, then solicits input from a diverse array of interested community members, and then votes at a public meeting on whether to recommend the BGN approve or disapprove the proposal. Based on the committee vote, the CACGN provides its recommendation to the BGN, which has the ultimate authority for determining each name change proposal. Only those names officially approved by BGN become an official name of a geographic feature.

To enable Californians to more easily track the status of geographic name proposals and recommendations forwarded to the BGN, the CACGN will maintain a publicly accessible database that will be located online at <https://cacgn.ca.gov/> and managed by the California Natural Resources Agency.

##### Geographic Name Change Proposal – Vetting Process

The CACGN evaluates name change proposals within the BGN Principles, Policies, and Procedures guidance.

1. All geographic name proposals forwarded from the BGN to the CACGN will be reviewed and researched to identify historical context, any association with discrimination and violence, geography, relevance, and impacted stakeholders.
2. Input will be solicited from California Native American tribes, relevant community members, experts, and land managing agencies.
  - a. In accordance with Executive Order N-15-19, the CACGN will seek “meaningful input into matters that may affect tribal communities” from representatives of tribal governments. In coordination with the Native American Heritage Commission, the CACGN will invite relevant California Native American tribes to a formal consultation.
3. The CACGN will consult legal counsel to review geographic name change proposals, as appropriate.
4. Findings will be presented at the CACGN committee meetings for committee review and formal recommendations.

## **V. COMMITTEE COMPOSITION**

The CACGN shall consist of the following persons as primary committee members with voting authority:

1. Designee from the California Department of Water Resources
2. Designee from the California Department of Parks and Recreation
3. Designee from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife
4. Designee from the California Department of Conservation
5. Designee from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
6. Designee from the Native American Heritage Commission
7. Designee from the California State Library
8. Designee from the California African American Museum

The CACGN shall also include the following persons as primary ex-officio members:

1. Designee from the California Department of Transportation
2. Member or designee of the Select Committee on Native American Affairs
3. Member or designee of the Legislative Black Caucus
4. Member or designee of the Latino Legislative Caucus
5. Member or designee of the Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus
6. Member or designee of the Legislative LGBTQ Caucus
7. Member or designee of the Legislative Women's Caucus
8. The Tribal Advisor to the Office of the Governor
9. The California Natural Resources Agency Representative

The CACGN shall also include the following persons as primary federal advisors:

1. United States Geological Survey
2. United States Bureau of Land Management
3. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
4. United States Forest Service
5. National Park Service

The CACGN may also include alternative committee, ex-officio, and advisory members.

- Each department or legislative caucus may select a person to serve as an alternative committee, ex-officio, or advisory member (alternative member) from their agency to serve on the CACGN in the absence of the primary committee, ex-officio, or advisory member (primary member).
- Alternative members shall receive the same orientation and training as primary members. It is the intent of this Charter to ensure the consistency of the operations of the CACGN.

- When serving in the absence of the primary member, the alternative member shall have the same authorities and responsibilities as the primary member. Upon the return of the primary member, the authorities and responsibilities shall revert from the alternative member back to the primary member.
- Alternative members may not serve as Chair or Vice Chair of the CACGN and may only vote for Chair or Vice Chair as advised by their agency primary member.
- Primary members shall notify the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson via email at least 14 days in advance of a meeting that they will be absent and designating their alternative member to serve.

## **VI. COMMITTEE MEMBER TERMS**

Committee, ex-officio, and advisory primary and alternative members shall serve at the pleasure of their departments or legislative caucus, which shall designate their members in a letter to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency. Primary and alternative members shall be reviewed by their department or legislative caucus no less often than every two years. Primary and alternative members may be re-designated with a letter to the Secretary of the Natural Resources Agency.

Members and terms can be found on <https://cacgn.ca.gov/>.

## **VII. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Committee Members

- The Chairperson is succeeded by the Vice Chairperson every even year. In the event the Vice Chair position is vacant, the Committee will then vote to nominate a Chairperson for consideration by the Secretary for Natural Resources (ex-officio and federal advisor members excluded). The Secretary makes the final appointment.
- A vote on a Vice Chairperson will take place when the position is vacant, to nominate for consideration by the Secretary for Natural Resources (ex-officio and federal advisor members excluded). The Secretary makes the final appointment.
- Research assigned cases in a timely and thorough manner.
- Attend committee meetings and come prepared to discuss agenda items and present on assigned cases.
- Assist in identifying relevant and interested community members, experts, and land managing agencies to provide input on geographic name changes and naming of new features.
- Work with other committee members and ex-officio members between meetings when necessary to assure diverse views are included in committee proposals.
- Provide research and review support when applicable to a committee member's expertise.

- Discuss name change proposals to evaluate whether geographic names have been associated with discrimination and violence.
- Vote, defer action, and request further review and outreach, or abstain from a vote if a conflict of interest is identified.
- Approve committee minutes as required.

#### Ex-Officio Members

- Attend committee meetings and come prepared to discuss agenda items.
- Assist in identifying relevant and interested community members, experts, and land managing agencies to provide input on geographic name changes and naming of new features.
- Provide research and review support when applicable to an ex-officio member's expertise.
- Discuss name change proposals to evaluate whether geographic names have been associated with discrimination and violence.

#### Federal Advisor Members

- Attend committee meetings and come prepared to discuss agenda items.
- Assist in identifying relevant and interested community members, experts, and land managing agencies to provide input on geographic name changes and naming of new features.
- Provide research and review support when applicable to a federal advisor member's expertise.
- Discuss name change proposals to evaluate whether geographic names have been associated with discrimination and violence.

#### Committee Chairperson

The CACGN Chairperson serves the committee and the BGN at the pleasure of the Secretary for Natural Resources. In the event the Vice Chairperson position is vacant, the Chairperson is nominated by a primary committee member, receive a majority vote from committee members, and the Secretary makes the final appointment. The Chairperson serves for a term of one year and may serve up to three terms. The Chairperson must be a current primary member of the CACGN and a full-time employee of the agency they represent.

Once appointed, the Chairperson will take on the following responsibilities for the CACGN:

- Open and close each committee meeting.
- Facilitate meetings with assistance from support staff.
- Develop and distribute meeting agendas in advance of committee meetings to both committee members and the public.
- Approve a meeting summary following each committee meeting.

- Assure committee minutes are kept and then formally approved by voting committee members.
- Oversee all legal matters for the committee.
- Communicate committee recommendations on geographic name proposals to the BGN.
- Regularly communicate with and update the California Natural Resources Agency.

#### Committee Vice Chairperson

The CACGN Vice Chairperson serves the committee and the BGN at the pleasure of the Secretary for Natural Resources. The Vice Chairperson is nominated by primary committee members, receives a majority vote from the committee, and the Secretary makes the final appointment. The Vice Chairperson serves for a term of one year, succeeds the Chairperson every even year or in the event of a vacancy, and may serve up to three terms. The Vice Chairperson must be a current primary member of the CACGN and a full-time employee of the agency they represent.

Once appointed by the Secretary for Natural Resources, the Vice Chairperson will take on the following responsibilities for the CACGN:

- Serve as Chairperson and take on the authorities and responsibilities of the Chairperson in the absence of the CACGN Chairperson.
- Support the Chairperson in the facilitation of meetings with assistance from support staff.
- Support the Chairperson in the development and distribution of meeting agendas in advance of committee meetings to both committee members and the public.
- Regularly communicate with and update the CACGN Chairperson and the California Natural Resources Agency. Assist Chairperson as necessary with committee matters.
- Succeeds the Chairperson every even year or in the event of a vacancy.

#### Committee Meetings

- Committee meetings will be open to the public.
- Committee members will meet approximately, but not limited to, three times a year.
- Meeting agendas will be shared with all committee members and posted online for public review prior to each meeting.
- There will be an opportunity for public comment at each meeting.
- Meeting summaries focused on key outcomes will be produced and made available to the public on the CACGN website.
- After reviewing active name proposals, the committee will vote to make proposal recommendations. The committee must have a quorum of a minimum of six members present to take a vote.

### **VIII. AGENCY OFFICIAL TO WHOM THE COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The CACGN shall provide regular updates to a representative designated by the Secretary in the California Natural Resources Agency.

### **IX. ESTIMATED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS**

The CACGN will rely on existing staff and resources until such time as the State may allocate funds.

### **X. ALLOWANCES FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Members of the CACGN will serve without pay. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business in the performance of services of the CACGN, members, to the extent funding is available, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence.

### **XI. AMENDMENTS TO THIS CHARTER**

Amendments to this charter may be updated as needed by the Secretary for Natural Resources in consultation with the members of the CACGN.

Amended Charter Approved on February 14, 2022

  
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Wade Crowfoot  
Secretary for Natural Resources